

Amendment to the Drawings:

Please replace original drawing sheets 1/2 and 2/2 with the corrected Replacement Sheets 1/3 and 2/3 attached hereto. The corrected drawing sheets include the addition of element numbers to Figs 1 and 3. The changes to the drawings are shown in red on the Annotated Mark-up Drawings that are likewise attached hereto.

Please add new drawing sheet 3/3. The new drawing sheet includes new Figure 3A.

- - REMARKS - -

Claims 1-45 are currently pending in the application. Claims 6, 8 and 9 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 18-27, 32, 34-36, and 39-43 have been amended. The changes to the amended claims from the previous versions to the rewritten versions are shown above with brackets for deleted matter and underlines for added matter. New claim 46 has been added. No new matter has been added as a result of these amendments.

In the outstanding Office Action, the title of the invention has been objected to as not descriptive. The Examiner has suggested that the title be changed to "Catheter with a Plurality of Wire Guide Access Ports." Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's assertion that the title is not descriptive. Nevertheless, the title has been amended as suggested by the Examiner.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings have been objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) because the figures purportedly fail to show certain features or element numbers described in the specification. As a consequence, the drawings have been amended to include the missing element numbers and features. In particular, Figure 1 has been amended to include an element number (50) referencing the markers adjacent to the intermediate wire guide access ports, as those markers are described in paragraph [0026] of the specification. A corresponding amendment has been made to paragraph [0026]. In addition, Figure 3 has been amended to include element numbers (42, 44 and 48) that are shown in Figure 1 and described in, for example, paragraph [0024] of the specification. A Figure 3A has also been added to illustrate the arrangement described in the last two sentences of paragraph [0024] of the specification, i.e., wherein the more distal intermediate access port (44) may end up inside the handle (64) of the endoscope (60). A reference to Figure 3A has been added to paragraphs [0017] and [0024]. Applicants believe that the Examiner's objections to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a), particularly with respect to the non-cancelled claims, have been overcome by the corrections to Figures 1 and 3, and the addition of new drawing Figure 3A.

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-7, 13, 18, 20, 22, 36, 38 and 43-45 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,932,413 to Shockey et al. (hereinafter "Shockey"), U.S. Patent No. 5,395,335 to Jang (hereinafter "Jang"), or U.S. Patent No. 5,547,469 to Rowland et al. (hereinafter "Rowland"). Claims 8-12, 14-17, 19, 21, 23-35 and 39-42 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Jang, either alone or in view of one or more additional references identified in the Office Action. Claims 37 and 45 have been objected to, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the claims from which these claims depend. The claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 are respectfully traversed. The claims have nevertheless been amended to clarify the invention and eliminate any ambiguities that may have been the basis for the rejections.

New independent claim 46 is based on objected to claim 37 and includes all of the limitations of base claim 36. Claim 46 is therefore patentable and no further discussion of this claim is required.

Independent claims 1 and 18 are each directed to a catheter having a plurality of intermediate wire guide access ports and least one slidable tube for selectively allowing and restricting access to at least two of the plurality of the intermediate wire guide access ports. Independent claim 27 is directed to a system including an endoscope and a catheter, the catheter having features and limitations similar to the catheters called for in claims 1 and 18. Independent claim 36 is similar, but is specifically directed to a sphincterotome. Independent claims 39, 42 and 43 are each directed to methods of advancing and utilizing the claimed catheter with an endoscope.

As set forth in detail in the specification for the instant application, the intermediate wire guide access ports are a novel feature of the claimed catheter and provide an important advantage over prior art catheters. For example, the location of the intermediate wire guide access ports permits a user to position at least one of these intermediate wire guide ports near the proximal port of the endoscope working channel during typical endoscopic medical procedures. This provides the user with single-handed control of the endoscope and a wire guide passing through the port. When not

being utilized, the intermediate wire guide ports may be closed to prevent fluids from leaking out through the ports. One or more sleeves are provided to selectively open or close these ports.

The above-described features are not disclosed or suggested by the prior art. For example, the catheter disclosed in Jang does not have a plurality of intermediate wire guide ports that are located so as to be positioned near the proximal port of the endoscope working channel, particularly when the distal end of the catheter is aligned with or extended distally of the distal end of the endoscope. In fact, Jang does not even illustrate or describe the use of the catheter with an endoscope. Moreover, Jang does not disclose at least one slidable tube for selectively allowing and restricting access to at least two intermediate wire guide access ports.

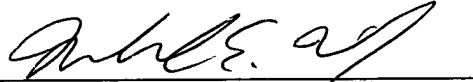
These same features are likewise missing from Shockey. For example, Shockey fails to disclose or suggest least one slidable tube for selectively allowing and restricting access to at least two intermediate wire guide access ports. The Examiner's contention that element (34) (shown in Figs. 2A-C) is a "slidable tube is respectfully traversed. Element (34) is an introducer tube and is clearly not part of catheter (10). Shockey also fails to illustrate or describe the use of the catheter with and endoscope.

Rowland does not disclose a plurality of intermediate wire guide access ports and is therefore not relevant. The remaining references relied on in connection with the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) similarly fail to disclose the features and limitations discussed above and are likewise of little relevance.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully contend that each of the independent claims, 1, 18, 27, 36, 39, 42 and 43 are not rendered unpatentable by the prior art references, either alone or if combined. The remaining claims are each dependent on one of these independent claims and are therefore likewise patentable.

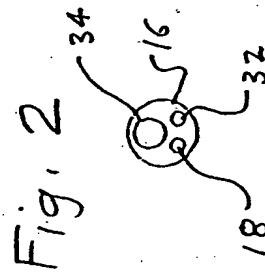
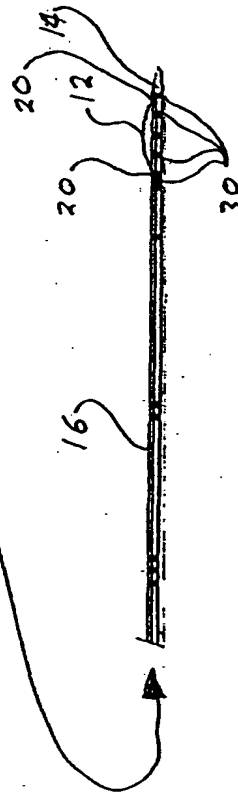
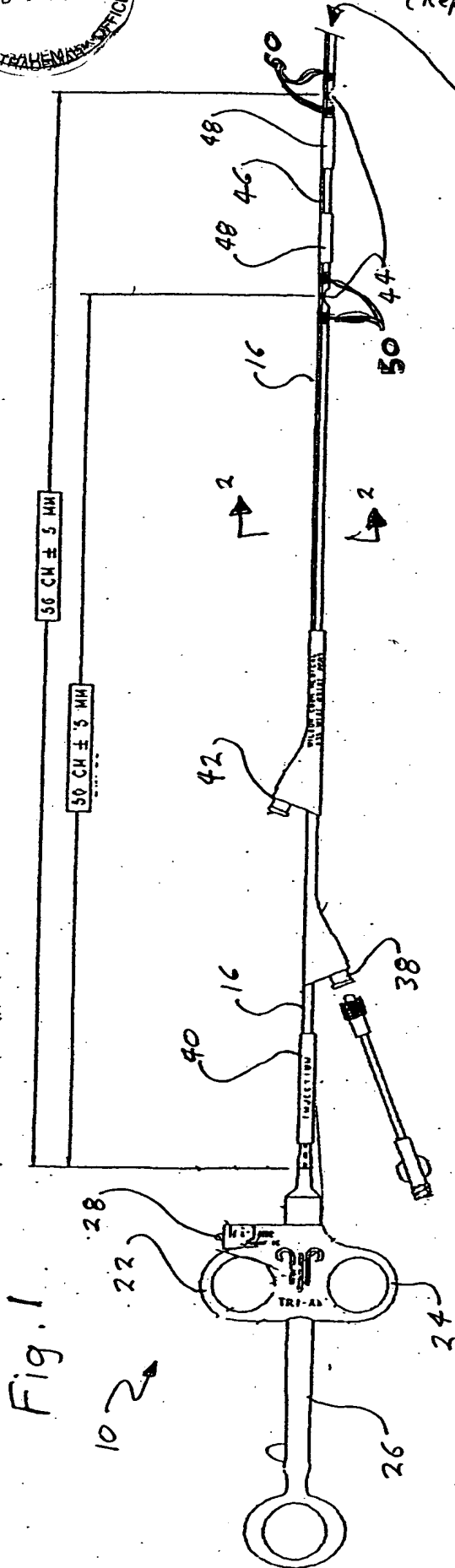
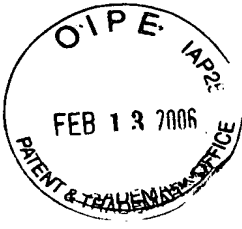
It is therefore believed that the application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is now earnestly requested. If for any reason the Examiner is not able to allow the application, he is requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at (312) 321-4273.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Milz", written over a horizontal line.

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